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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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TREES MUFFLE DIN

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The Ears Have Had It. Properly located plantings of trees and shrubs can substantially reduce the current noise level of the Century -- highway traffic, shopping centers, heavy industry. This is the major finding of experiments made by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with the University of Nebraska. Scientists involved in the three-year study report that the continual increase in the community noise level during the past 20 years indicates a future noise problem comparable to the current air pollution problem of large industrial centers. A 77-page report, "Trees and Shrubs for Noise Abatement," (Research Bulletin 246) gives a technical account of the experiments. It is designed to provide accurate, useful information which can be used by landscape architects, horticulturists, and nurserymen - as well as homeowners - in determining proper placement, heights, and widths of tree and shrub belts. The information can assist in achieving the best noise filtering for parks, picnic areas, housing developments, and private homes from highway and industrial sounds. The report includes five noise problems and illustrates how findings can be applied to solve them. A very limited number of copies of the report are available for 50 cents each from the Department of Information, East Campus, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68503.

OLD STANDBY UNDER NEW STANDARDS

Consumer Comments Invited. That old standby, peanut butter, may soon be meeting new standards. USDA has proposed revision of U.S. grades for the popular product for grading all styles and types permitted under the Food and Drug Administration's new peanut butter identification standards. Under the proposal, peanut butter would conform to the FDA standards for grading peanut butter prepared from peanuts with or without skins to which stabilizers, salt, and nutritive sweeteners may or may not have been added. It also includes the FDA requirement that peanut butter contain a minimum of 90 percent peanuts. Two grade classifications are designated: U.S. Grade A and U.S. Grade B. The use of Federal grade standards and grading services is voluntary and is paid for by the user. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, in duplicate, to the Hearing Clerk, Room 112A, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250, by December 13. Additional information on the proposal is available from the Fruit and Vegetable Division, Consumer and Marketing Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.



WARM NOSTALGIA

Around The Fireplace. Relaxing on a wintery evening before a cheery fireplace -- a scene right out of our nostalgia. But before we relax completely, it is a good idea to take a look at the fireplace and chimney -- the design, safety, and maintenance. In some mild climates, fireplaces can provide all the heat needed. But they really are not an economical heating method -- only about one-third as efficient as a good stove or circulator heater. But who wants to spend a wintery evening before a stove? Fireplaces have their good points, though, beyond the nostalgic value. They can enhance the appearance and comfort of a room and use fuel that might otherwise be wasted. And what is a fireplace without a chimney? This necessary requirement should be designed and maintained just as carefully as the fireplace. USDA experts recommend that fireplaces and chimneys be designed and built by persons experienced in this type of work. The homeowner, however, should have a working knowledge of fireplaces and chimneys to assist in the designing, and to properly inspect and care for the complete unit. Information and tips on these are contained in the USDA booklet, "Fireplaces and Chimneys" (Farmers Bulletin 1889). Copies are for sale for 20 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

HOW SWEET IT IS

Sugarbeets, . . Past and Present. About one-third of the Nation's sugar supply is produced from sugarbeets grown in the U.S. This amounts to a good sized lump when you consider that in 1970 the Nation's sugar supply was a whopping 6.5 billion pounds. Looking back into history, the credit for getting the commercial sugarbeet industry going in the world goes to Napoleon. During the Napoleonic wars, France's supply of imported sugar was stopped by an effective British blockade. The French tried getting sugar from grapes, trees, sweet sorghum, starch -- none of which were commercially successful. Then beet sugar production hit the mark. From France beet sugar production spread to Germany -- where in 1747 a chemist had already discovered that beet sugar and cane sugar were chemically the same -- then on to Italy, Holland, Austria, and Russia. Americans, however, had to wait until later to satisfy their sweet tooth with beet sugar; the first successful beet sugar factory in the U.S. was not established until after the Civil War.

PLENTIFUL FOODS FOR NOVEMBER

Menu Help For The Holidays. In the cool, cool, cool of November, appetites are hardy and Thanksgiving has arrived. Foods on the Plentiful List for the month can help food shoppers and menu planners with some bright ideas at prices that won't heat up the budget. Leading the List are rice and pork accompanied by potatoes and potato products, prunes and prune juice, apples, applesauce and apple juice, cranberries, cranberry sauce and cranberry juice cocktail, fresh and canned pears, turkeys, eggs, and broiler-fryers. On the December List will be broiler-fryers, potatoes, apples, applesauce and apple juice, rice, fresh pears, cranberries, cranberry sauce and cranberry juice cocktail, split peas, turkey and eggs.

A CHILD AND HIS FOOD BILL

Where Does All That Food Money Go? If you are a parent, you already know that your offspring eat up a considerable portion of the family food budget. And if you stop to think, it's a good thing that feeding the children is on a pay-as-you-go basis. For instance, consider the feeding of a child in a four-member family. If the family's food spending falls in line with USDA's moderate-cost plan, that child would run up a food bill of about \$8500 by the time he is 18. The moderate-cost plan is one of four USDA food plans -- the others are economy, low-cost, and liberal -- that can help gauge the quantities of food needed for individuals of specified age and sex at the level of spending the family can afford. Say a family of four has two elementary school children. At the moderate-cost level the family would spend about \$40 a week for food at home, with the children's share about \$9.00 each. If these children are a boy and a girl, their food bill would run about the same -- until they reach the age of 9. Then a gap in the eating pattern appears: the girl's food bill peaks at about \$11.00 a week between the ages of 12-15; the boy's food costs climb to a high of about \$13.50 a week between the ages of 15-17. The size of the family is also a factor. The two-child family with a net income of \$8000 would probably spend at the moderate-cost plan level. Add two children to the same family, and the food spending per child would fall in the low-cost category. Food costs per individual in large families are lowered about ten percent by savings gained through buying and cooking in large quantities. All these costs refer to 21 meals a week prepared at home. They don't include the cost of candy bars, ice cream cones, or little friends invited to dinner.

CONSUMER INFORMATION BY MAIL ORDER

Catalog Lists Federal Publications. Nearly 200 consumer information booklets issued by the Federal Government are listed in the latest edition of a free Index of Consumer Product Information. The 16-page catalog was developed by the General Services Administration's Consumer Product Information Coordinating Center with the cooperation of the President's Office of Consumer Affairs. Some of the publications listed in the Index are available at 27 Federal Information Centers around the Nation or can be ordered by using a form contained in the catalog. The low-cost publications advise consumers how to buy, use, and take care of products. They cover many areas, including building, buying, and financing a home, making home repairs and improvements, budgeting, shopping, and health. Copies of the free Index may be obtained by writing to: Consumer Products Information, Washington, D.C. 20407.

WHERE THERE'S COTTAGE CHEESE, THERE'S A WHEY

Now With Some Iron In It. Milk and other food products may be enriched with iron by using a new powder obtained by combining iron with the proteins in cottage cheese whey. The process for obtaining the white, fluffy, mild tasting powder was reported earlier this year by scientists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. Later experiments established the ability of animals to assimilate the iron nutritionally. A trained taste panel found that milk can be enriched with the iron-protein powder without any effect on the flavor. The same was true of bread baked with the powder as an ingredient. If the powder should be approved as a food additive by the Food and Drug Administration, its commercialization may provide a preferred means of enriching dairy products, bread, and other foods with iron.

BRIE, BEL PAESE, AND BRICK

Cheese By Many Other Names. With the help of a new 24-page booklet from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, you could become a cheese know-it-all. You can be the first one on the block to know that mozzarella cheese was originally made from buffalo milk. And the booklet contains much more -- like characteristics of some 28 popular cheeses, how and from what they are made, how to buy, and how and when to use the dozens of kinds of cheese on display in the supermarket. A two-page photograph of some common cheeses keyed with numbers will help you learn to recognize your favorite. Single free copies of "How To Buy Cheese" (G-193) are available from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250:

SELECT JUST THE RIGHT TREE

And Yule Be Happy. What is fresh, clean, healthy, well-trimmed, and has a good shape? It is the list of qualities you should look for in selecting the perfect Christmas tree -- a time that is almost here again. The Christmas tree, with its forest fragrance and freshness, has come to represent the Yule season. For many families, choosing just the right tree is one of the highlights of the holiday preparations. In the U.S., practically all species of evergreens are used for Christmas trees. However, some are more popular and in greater supply than others. Five of the most widely grown and sold trees are described in a new USDA publication, "How To Buy A Christmas Tree" (G-189). Sketches of the five kinds of trees along with a chart on tree taper percentages are included, and the three grades of Christmas trees used in the wholesale trade are explained. Tips on selecting, buying, and caring for Christmas trees can help make your choosing easier. Copies of the publication are available at 15 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

FORCING THE ISSUE

Color Your Christmas (And Winter) With Flowers. New types of poinsettias developed by horticulturists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service are available commercially in varying shades of pink as well as the traditional red. This makes a whole family of poinsettias -- from red through pink to white -- to color your holidays. Home gardeners and housewives can insure blooms for Christmas by early preparation and tender loving care of both poinsettias and Christmas cactus. Although early October is the ideal time to begin these forceful activities, November is not too late to prepare the plants for late January through Memorial Day blooming. The whole process does take some extra care each day. The plants should get as much sunlight as possible during the day, but they need long cool nights -- temperatures of at least 60 degrees F are ideal. At night, the plants should not be exposed to artificial lighting; at least 12 hours of continuous darkness are required to start the flowering process. Avoid placing poinsettias in a draft and supply sufficient water so the soil is always moist. During active growth, feed poinsettias regularly, preferably with dilute solutions of soluble fertilizers.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Washington, D.C. 20250; telephone (202) DU8-5437.